



ROCKDALE COUNTY PRESS RELEASE

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ARC Honors Rockdale County for its Commitment to Sustainability

CONYERS, Ga. – Rockdale County was one of five local governments to be recognized this week by the Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) for leadership in implementing policies and practices that contribute to efficient and sustainable use of resources in metro Atlanta.

“Over the past 24 months, our Directors and leadership team were tasked with Rockdale becoming a Green Community,” Chairman and CEO Richard Oden said. “They worked very hard to accomplish this significant achievement to make this community sustainable for our future.”

Rockdale was honored at ARC’s board meeting Jan. 27 for becoming a Bronze Certified Green Community. This is the first time the county has achieved certification in ARC’s Green Communities program. ARC also recognized the cities of Atlanta, Norcross, Peachtree Corners and Woodstock for certifying or upgrading their certification in ARC’s six-year-old Green Communities program.

“These local governments are to be commended for making their communities more sustainable places,” said Kerry Armstrong, ARC board chairman. “Their efforts to conserve energy, reduce waste and protect natural resources set an example for the entire region.”

Steps Rockdale took to become certified include:

- Capturing rainwater to irrigate soccer fields at Earl O’Neal Park, using a rainwater retention pond. This saves 800,000 gallons of potable water a year.
- Installing LED lighting at Johnson Park Recreation Center, resulting in an 83 percent reduction in energy use for lighting. This change will result in more than \$99,000 in savings over the next five years.
- Making fresh fruits and vegetables available at the Rockdale County-supported farmer’s market. Residents may also grow their own vegetables year-round at the Parker Community Garden and the Senior Center Garden.
- Installing bike racks at more than half of its community facilities, with plans to place bike racks at the remaining facilities in the next two years. Each bike rack features a sign with a QR code that be scanned via smart phones to pull up locations of other Rockdale County bike racks.

- Building Lorraine Park Trailhead on a brownfield site that had been contaminated by an auto salvage yard. The county purchased the riverfront property and remediated the soil and groundwater. A sight that once held more than 800 tons of concrete, 246 tons of trash and 27 tons of tires is now a beautiful part of the Arabia River Trail system.

ARC developed the Green Communities Program in 2009 to recognize local governments that invest in programs and policies that lead to a more sustainable region. The nationally recognized program showcases the ways in which local governments are helping transform the region by reducing their environmental footprint.

Since 2009, 20 jurisdictions in the 10-county region have been certified. Cities and counties earn Green Communities certification by implementing practices and policies in 10 categories, ranging from energy efficiency and green building to transportation and water efficiency. ARC's Green Communities program was the first program in the country seeking to transform a region by promoting sustainability through a "green" certification program for local governments.

Complete information about ARC's Green Communities Certification Program, including the measures each community has implemented, is available on the agency's website www.atlantaregional.com/greencommunities.



Members of the Rockdale County delegation celebrate receiving the Atlanta Regional Commission's Bronze Green Community certification. It is the first for Rockdale County.

The Atlanta Regional Commission is the official planning agency for the 10-county Atlanta Region, including Cherokee, Clayton, Cobb, DeKalb, Douglas, Fayette, Fulton, Gwinnett, Henry and Rockdale counties as well as the City of Atlanta and 70 other cities. The Atlanta Regional Commission serves as a catalyst for regional progress by focusing leadership, attention and planning resources on key regional issues.

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ROCKDALE COUNTY IS A PERFECTLY-POSITIONED COMMUNITY WITH A ROCK-SOLID APPROACH DEDICATED TO EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE, QUALITY OF LIFE AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.



Rockdale County

Leading the Way to Sustainability

In 2015, Rockdale County achieved Bronze level certification under the Atlanta Regional Commission's Green Communities Program. The following measures have been implemented by Rockdale County to reduce its environmental impact and promote sustainability. These measures received points for certification.

Green Building

- » Offers up to a 50 percent rebate on building permit fees for developments seeking green building certifications such as EarthCraft, Energy Star, Green Globes and LEED.
- » Encourages green building in affordable housing initiatives through a 75 percent rebate on building permit fees if at least 25 percent of the units are affordable.

Energy Efficiency

- » Adopted an environmentally preferable purchasing policy to purchase products that are recyclable, reusable or contain recycled materials, including Energy Star rated equipment.
- » Retrofitted over 40 percent of its traffic signals with energy saving LED bulbs and has a plan in place to retrofit the remaining incandescent traffic bulbs over the next four years.
- » Adopted a lights out/power down policy requiring employees and maintenance staff to turn off lights and all other non-essential electronic equipment when not in use.
- » Retrofits inefficient incandescent lights with higher efficiency LEDs. All fixtures in the Johnson Park Recreation Center were retrofitted with LED bulbs with an estimated savings of nearly \$20,000 per year in energy costs and an 83 percent reduction in energy used by lighting.

Green Power



- » Harnesses solar energy on the roof of a county fire station to offset the consumption of the station. The solar system generates 23,600 kWh of energy per year, will save \$4,000 per year after the initial investment is paid off and will result in a reduction of 17.4 tons of CO₂ per year and 14,160 gallons of water per year.
- » Offers incentives for solar energy installation on new construction in the form of a 15 percent rebate on building permit fees.

Water Efficiency



- » Uses captured rainwater from an onsite lake to maintain eight soccer fields at Earl O'Neal Park, irrigating a total of 25 acres of land and saving a total of 800,000 gallons of potable water per year.
- » Completed an audit with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division and is in compliance with the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District's Water Supply and Water Conservation Management Plan, Wastewater Management Plan and Watershed Management Plan.
- » Offers incentives to developers and home builders to make new homes WaterSense certified in the form of a 10 percent rebate on building permit fees.

Trees & Greenspace



- » Protected approximately 3,606 acres of greenspace in the county, which equates to 51 acres of greenspace per 1,000 residents.
- » Provides space, water and parking for the Rockdale County-UGA Extension Community Garden, which operates from April through November.
- » Provides the location, parking, vendor training and certification for the Rockdale Farmers Market, held Saturday and Tuesday mornings from June through October.

Transportation & Air Quality



- » Adopted a no-idling policy to minimize the idling time of all vehicles owned by the county.
- » Adopted a complete streets policy to incorporate the needs of all users in the construction of roadway projects. An example of implementation of the policy includes the construction of a multi-use trail and sidewalks during the widening of Sigman Road.
- » Synchronized traffic signals along major corridors in partnership with Georgia DOT's RTOP program. This has resulted in an average reduction of travel time delay of 90 percent.
- » Provides bicycle parking at over 50 percent of its community facilities, with installation at the remainder of community facilities scheduled within the next two years. Each bike rack features a sign with a QR code that can be scanned to pull up the locations of other Rockdale County bike racks.
- » Established a maximum parking requirement to promote alternate transportation and pedestrian movement and reduce environmental impact. Developed procedures for reducing minimum parking requirements through shared parking. Requires that surface parking spaces above the minimum requirements must use pervious paving surfaces.
- » Revised its Zoning Ordinance in order to allow for expanded placement of electric vehicle charging stations and electric vehicle battery exchange stations. Installed a publically accessible EV charging station at the county's Tax Commissioner Office.

Recycling & Waste Reduction



- » Adopted an environmentally preferable purchasing policy for products that are recyclable, reusable or contain recycled materials, including Energy Star rated equipment.
- » Purchases copier, fax and printer paper that contains at least 30 percent recycled content.
- » Provides drop off locations for the recycling of electronics, batteries and cellphones.

Land Use



- » Located the Lorraine Park and Trailhead at the brownfield site of a former auto salvage business. As part of the site's remediation, 800 tons of concrete were recycled, 246 tons of trash were removed and 27 tons of tires were recycled.
- » Renovated a vacant historic public school into a 23,000 square foot facility that houses the county's Departments of Health, Juvenile Justice and Veterans Services.
- » Replaced an unused production plant with a Tennis Center for tournaments, school teams and public events rather than build on an undeveloped site.

- » Offers incentives for smart growth, including a 50 percent rebate on building permits or land disturbance fees for nonresidential infill development within an identified Urban Redevelopment Area. Provides a 100 percent rezoning fee rebate on rezonings from any zoning district to the Mixed Use Development district within the Salam Road Corridor. Provides a 50 percent land disturbance fee rebate for any multifamily or nonresidential project that provides open space at least twice the minimum area required by the zoning district. Provides a 100 percent rezoning fee rebate on rezonings from standard residential zoning districts to either Collaborative Residential Subdivision or Conservation Subdivision Development District.
- » Received an Opportunity Zone designation for its Urban Redevelopment Plan area targeting 1,600 acres on the west side of the county. This designation allows businesses in the area to qualify for tax incentives for job creation.

Education



- » Educates employees on the county's sustainability initiatives via communications from department directors, signage and email.
- » Informs residents of the county's sustainability initiatives via programming on the county's government access channel, press releases through local media outlets, postings to the county website and printed materials available at certain government locations.

Innovation



- » Completes a Community Appearance Index each year to evaluate and score the amount of litter, graffiti, illegal signs, abandoned vehicles and outside storage within the community. The information collected is used to determine which areas of the county are most in need of attention during community cleanup events.
- » Piloted the installation of Automatic Meter Reading/Advanced Meter Reading Infrastructure (AMR/AMI) within one district of the county with great success. In one year alone, over 400 leaks were identified on the customer side of the meter, which would have otherwise been left unknown to the customer until a large water bill was received. As a result of the pilot, AMI/AMR meters are already being rolled out to a second district and will be installed countywide within the next 8 years.
- » Installed and maintains the Parker Road Demonstration Rain Garden. The 1,500 square foot garden treats stormwater flowing off of 21,500 square feet of surrounding roof and parking lot surfaces. The garden site was chosen because of its high visibility along a busy arterial road and its location beside the community farmers market and tennis center. It includes almost 50 species of plant life and has been used in presentations to a number of groups from within and outside of the community.

For more information on all the certified communities, visit the Certified Green Communities webpage at <http://atlantaregional.com/greencommunities>.